

Numbers

1. Introduction to Numbers

- 1) Title – in the Hebrew Bible it is “in the wilderness of.” The Septuagint titled it “numbers.” So titled because of the “numbering” of Israel at the beginning and end of the book.
- 2) Theme: **Wilderness Wanderings**
- 3) Key Passage: **14:28–30**
- 4) Content and Message
 - a. Israel spent a year at Mount Sinai receiving the Law, instructions for living, and building the Tabernacle and its furnishings
 - b. They then went north toward Canaan, arriving at Kadesh-Barnea
 - c. Despite a superior law, system of worship, and the promise of the Lord’s presence, their lack of faith resulted in four decades of wandering in the wilderness
 - d. Instead of acting and trusting as God’s chosen people, they murmured, complained, rebelled, and endured divine judgment
 - e. After forty years in the desert wilderness God fulfilled his promise and brought them to the edge of the Promised Land

☞ The **organization** of Israel for marching to the Promised Land and their **failure** to believe and obey God
- 5) Time Period Covered
 - a. Numbers 1–10 – these events fall within a **two**-month period
 - b. Numbers 11–24 – these events occur throughout **forty** years
 - c. Numbers 25–36 – these events occur in sometime during the **fortieth** year

2. Outline of Numbers

Basic Outline

- 1) At **Sinai**, 1:1–10:10
- 2) To **Kadesh**, 10:11–19:22
- 3) In the **Wilderness**, 19:23–21:35
- 4) At the **Jordan**, 22–36

More Detailed Outline

1) From Sinai Israel Prepares to Enter the Promised Land, 1:1–10:10

- a. First numbering, 1:1–54
- b. Arrangement of the camp, 2:1–34 (see chart on the next page)
- c. Instructions from God, 3:1–10:10

2) Israel Journeys from Sinai to Kadesh, 10:11–13:33

- a. Departure from Sinai, 10:11–36
- b. Murmuring complaints of the people, 11–12 (meat; Miriam and Aaron)
- c. Report of the 12 spies, 13

3) Failure at Kadesh and Forty Years of Wandering, 14:1–20:13

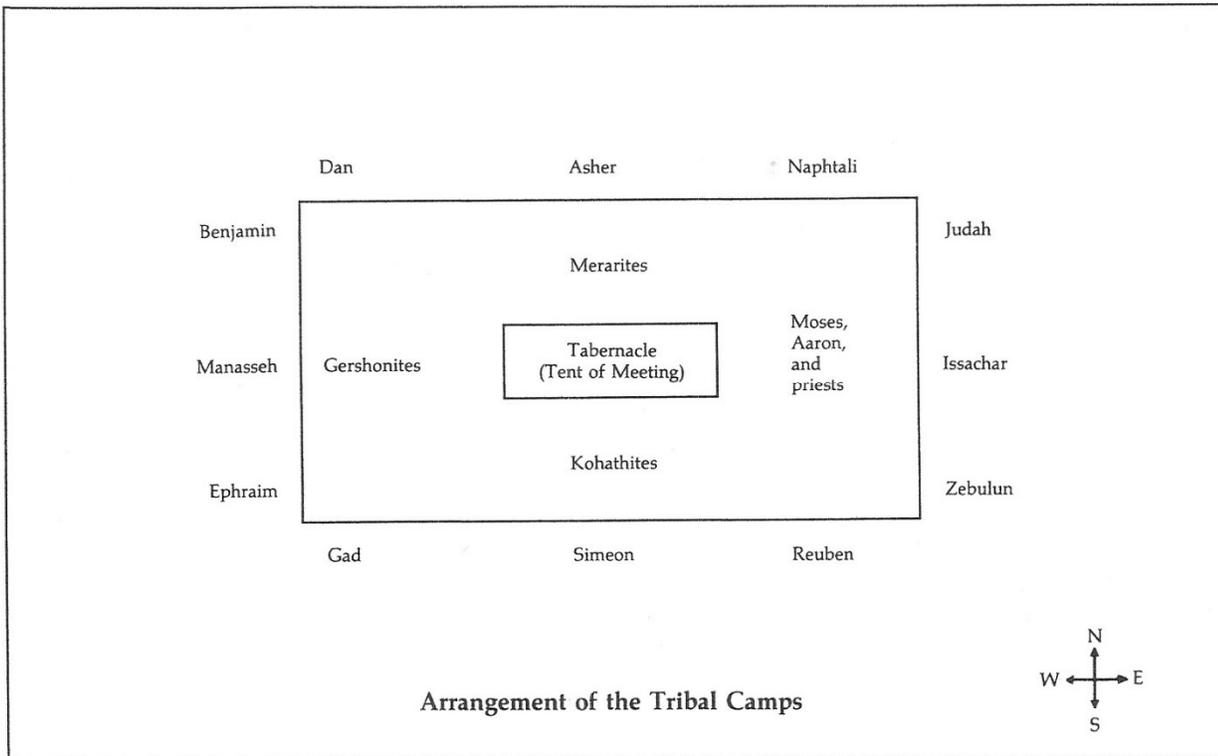
- a. Rebellion and judgment at Kadesh, 14–15
- b. Korah's rebellion, 16
- c. Aaron's rod that budded, 17
- d. Instructions to the Levites, 18–19 (duties, offerings, tithes, purification laws)
- e. Miriam's death and Moses' sin, 20:1–13

4) Approach to Canaan, 20:14–21:35

- a. Detour around Edom, 20:14–22
- b. Aaron dies, 20:23–29
- c. The brazen serpent, 21:1–9 (people discouraged, complained, go back to Egypt)
- d. Defeat of Sihon and Og, 21: 10–35

5) Israel by the Banks of the Jordan River, 22–36

- a. Balaam, the mercenary prophet, 22–25 (see p. 22 for discussion)
- b. Second numbering of Israel, 26
- c. Instruction and conquest, 27–36



(*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 218)

The Tabernacle was in the middle of the camp, physically emphasizing the central place the Lord had in Israel's life and worship. God chose to dwell among them, and they were to be aware of his presence.

The thousands of warriors who surrounded the Tabernacle protected it from attack. The Ark of the Covenant was probably carried at the head of the procession, symbolizing God's presence with his people (cf. 10:33-36).

When Israel was marching their procession was arranged in this way →

The Israelite Tribal Line of March

1. Judah
2. Issachar
3. Zebulun

4. Reuben
5. Simeon
6. Gad

Tent of Meeting
and Levites

7. Ephraim
8. Manasseh
9. Benjamin

10. Dan
11. Asher
12. Naphtali

Was Balaam a genuine prophet, a believer in the LORD? Despite the numerous instances where Balaam testified that he could only speak what the Lord told him to, we should not think of him as a genuine prophet of the Lord for the following reasons:

1. Close association with Moab and Midian, nations that desired Israel's **destruction**
2. References to divination and **sorcery** (22:7; 24:1)
3. Reception of pieces of sacrificed cattle and sheep (22:40), practice of examining livers to predict the future (**divination**)
4. **Peter** uses him as the standard of mercenary false teachers (2 Pet 2:15)
5. **Jude** describes the false teaching he addresses as “the error of Balaam” (Jude 4, 11)
6. **Jesus** equates the teaching of the Nicolaitans with Balaam's teaching (Rev 2:14–15)

Israel's intermarriage with Moabites (25:1ff)—“The counsel of Balaam” (31:16; cf. Rev 2:14)—was the result of and involvement in **idolatry** and **immorality**.